

Examiners' Report

IGCSE Religious Studies (4425)

June 2006

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES 4425, EXAMINERS' REPORT

Paper 1: Beliefs and Values

General Comments

IGCSE Religious Studies 4425 is a new examination which was offered for the first time in May 2006. Although the total entry was small, there was a wide range of performance by candidates, from A grade to E grade standard, indicating that the paper was appropriate for the ability range of the candidates for whom it was intended, and achieved satisfactory differentiation.

The questions in Paper 1 are generic and can be answered from the standpoint of one or more of the six major world religions (although there are four questions that ask candidates to answer from the standpoint of one chosen religion only). Sections A to D assess knowledge (AO1 in the specification) and understanding (AO2). In each section candidates must choose one of two three-part questions and answer all parts. Part (a) tests AO1 and relates to definitions of the key words for the particular section; part (b) also tests AO1 and requires candidates to **outline or describe** a religious (or non-religious) belief(s), teaching(s), or practice(s). Part (c) questions assess AO2 and require candidates to **explain** a religious (or non-religious) belief(s), teaching(s), or practice(s).

Section E assesses evaluation (AO3) and consists of eight questions, of which candidates must answer two. Questions take the form of controversial statements relating to the beliefs, teachings and practices covered in the previous sections. Candidates are asked whether they agree with the statement and to give reasons for their opinion.

Overall, candidates showed adequate to good knowledge of the religion(s) they had chosen to study. There was also evidence that they had studied and learned the key words. As a result, there were some good responses to the part (a) and (b) questions in Sections A to D. However, some candidates appeared to be more eager to demonstrate their knowledge of their chosen religion than to ensure its relevance to the question they were answering. It is of vital importance that candidates read all the questions carefully, to make certain that they understand exactly what the questions are about and what information they need to provide.

Several candidates seemed unclear about how to approach the part (c) questions in Sections A to D. Answers to 'explain why' questions (the majority) tended to be descriptive rather than explanatory, and were characterized by the absence of such words as 'because' and 'as'. Even the most able candidates struggled to get above Level 3. Few candidates answered the two 'explain how' questions. Candidates need to be completely clear about the difference between description and explanation and centres should refer to the relevant sections of the Teacher's Guide (pages 8, 15-16) for discussion of part (c) questions and the way they are assessed. Centres may find the discussion of the specimen answers particularly helpful (pages 23-25 of the Guide).

Answers to Section E questions were generally disappointing. Most responses were reasoned opinions which, although they were often well supported by religious/moral evidence, did not refer to another point of view. It is important to appreciate that, unless answers refer to another point of view (and also give an opinion and refer to at least one named religion), they cannot go beyond Level 2; and that, in order to go

beyond Level 3, they must give a balanced account of alternative points of view and reach a personal conclusion. Answers also tended to stray from the issue being evaluated. For example, some candidates who answered the question about the rights of animals wrote at length about the importance of animals and the value of pets. Centres need to refer to the Teacher's Guide (pages 9, 16-17) for discussion of Section E questions and the way they are assessed, and to the specimen Section E answers (pages 26-27).

Generally, there was evidence that candidates were insufficiently aware of the generic nature of Paper 1 and the need to have knowledge and understanding of key religious ideas that are not specific to any one religion. Perhaps reflecting this, some candidates interpreted Question 3(b), which required an outline of two different religious attitudes to abortion, as being about the attitudes of two different religions, while responses to Question 2(b), requiring an outline of the religious ideas of resurrection or rebirth, tended to contain teachings from chosen religions that were not relevant. Candidates must also be aware that, in addition to knowledge of the religion(s) they have studied, they need to have knowledge and understanding of non-religious ideas about many of the issues covered in Paper 1.

Section A

Question 1

Generally, candidates were able to give a definition of 'sin' in (a) and had good knowledge of their chosen religion's beliefs about the origin and purpose of the universe in (b). However, although candidates showed good knowledge of religious teachings about life after death, answers to (c) tended to be too descriptive.

Question 2

Few candidates chose this question. Some answers to (b) contained teachings from chosen religions about resurrection or rebirth that were not relevant to the question. Candidates obviously found the part (c) question (about why some people believe that human beings cannot be held responsible for their actions) difficult, and some did not attempt it.

Section B

Question 3

Candidates tended to confuse agnosticism with atheism in (a). Although they had good knowledge of religious teachings about abortion, some candidates interpreted (b) as being about the attitudes of two different religions, not two different religious attitudes - see the mark scheme for more detail of what was expected. Part (c) answers were too descriptive, outlining religious teachings about suffering rather than explaining why suffering may lead some people to reject of God.

Question 4

Very few candidates chose this question and responses were generally weak. It may be that some candidates were deterred by the 'explain how' question in part (c). Centres need to ensure that candidates can tackle such questions with confidence, and should refer to the published mark scheme for guidance about how candidates should approach this particular question.

Section C

Question 5

This was chosen by just under half the candidates, and parts (a) and (b) about the nuclear family and the purposes of marriage were generally quite well answered. However, candidates struggled with the issue of why some religious people choose to lead celibate lives. Few candidates seemed to understand that religious celibacy is a positive choice of a life dedicated to God, not just the last resort of the unhappy and badly-treated or a temporary refuge from unhappy or unsuccessful relationships.

Question 6

This was (just) the more popular choice in this section. Mostly it was quite well answered, with generally better explanations in part (c) than were found in other questions. It was interesting to note that, in (b), few candidates suggested non-educational examples of ways in which religious communities help with and support the upbringing of children. Most candidates outlined different forms of educational help and support.

Section D

Question 7

This was the more popular choice in this section. Parts (a) and (b) (on gender bias and different attitudes among the followers of one religion to other religions) were generally quite well answered, but answers to part (c) (on why religious people should work to overcome racism) tended to be descriptions rather than explanations.

Question 8

The candidates who chose this question tended to be uncertain about the definition of compassion in (a) and lacked relevant knowledge about the characteristics of a multi-faith society in (b). They were also unclear about how to approach the 'explain how' question in part (c) about applying the ideal of charity to relationships between rich and poor. Again, centres need to ensure that candidates can tackle 'explain how' questions with confidence, and should refer to the published mark scheme for guidance about how candidates should approach this particular question.

Section E

Question 9

This was the most popular question in Section E. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing about the issue of animal rights and supported their opinions with religious and moral evidence. However, perhaps because of their interest in the subject, answers tended to stray from the issue on to the importance of animals and the value of pets. Generally, answers did not refer to another point of view, and so were reasoned opinions which could not go beyond Level 2.

Question 10

Only one candidate attempted this question and the answer did not focus on the actual issue of whether anything exists apart from matter.

Question 11

A number of candidates attempted this question but, as well as being mainly reasoned opinions which did not refer to another point of view, answers tended to focus on ignorance of religious teaching(s) and its consequence(s), instead of on whether ignorance is the cause of human wrongdoing.

Question 12

This was quite a popular choice, and candidates had strong opinions about whether only those brought up in a religion will be true followers, well supported by religious and moral evidence. Generally, however, responses did not refer to another point of view.

Question 13

Responses stated candidates' own views about whether religious people should accept that divorce is part of modern life, and they were supported by moral and religious evidence. However, they did not refer to another point of view.

Question 14

Responses stated candidates' own views about whether religious objections to contraception just get in the way of sensible family planning, which were supported by moral and religious evidence. Generally, answers did not refer to another point of view.

Question 15

Only two candidates attempted this question about whether freedom of speech should not extend to criticising other people's religious beliefs. Responses contained candidates' own opinions and were supported by religious or moral evidence, but did not refer to another point of view.

Question 16

This question was quite a popular choice. Candidates had strong opinions about whether the followers of a religion should try to convert those who do not belong to their religion, and made effective use of religious and moral evidence to support them. In general, however, answers did not refer to another point of view.

Paper 2: The Religious Community

General Comments

IGCSE Religious Studies is a new specification offered for the first time in 2006. Although the total entry was small there was a range of performance by the candidates, indicating that the paper was appropriate for the ability range for which it was intended. Overall, the candidates showed a good knowledge of the religions they had chosen to study. Almost everyone chose to concentrate on a single faith (only one script contained answers based on two separate faiths). The majority of answers were written about Christianity and Islam. No questions on Buddhism or Judaism were attempted while only four candidates chose to write about Sikhism or Hinduism.

Candidates generally performed better at part (a) of the questions which dealt with AO1 (recall, selection, organisation and use of knowledge) rather than the more challenging (b) parts which assessed AO2 (description, analysis, explanation). Clearly there was a good knowledge of the religions on the part of the candidates but some found it difficult to use this knowledge to then explain certain aspects of their chosen religion. The distinction between description and explanation needs to be emphasised by centres .

Several candidates set out their answers in the form of 'bullet points'; whilst this did not affect overall marks on this occasion, centres should be aware that in future

examinations the use of bullet points may prevent candidates from reaching level 4 (since a list cannot be considered a coherent answer).

Section 1: Buddhism

Questions 1 to 5 were not attempted by any candidates.

Question 2

Not attempted by any candidates

Section 2: Christianity

Question 6

All candidates clearly had a good understanding of what takes place at Easter for many Christians. However, some found it difficult then to use this knowledge to explain the significance of the festival. Descriptions of the Eucharist were good.

Question 7

Answers reflected a good knowledge of the role of the Pope, showing that candidates had a firm grasp of the facts. Weaker candidates showed some confusion over their understanding of 'authority'.

Question 8

Some of the better scoring answers contained a pleasing account of how examples of Christian charity show how to apply the Christian principle of love in daily life. In part (a) some candidates needed a more thorough knowledge of the Sermon on the Mount.

Question 9

Most answers to part (a) restricted their outline of how Jesus was tested to the accounts of the three temptations from Matthew and Luke. To reach level 4 here, candidates needed to show a knowledge of other occasions in Jesus' life where his faith was tested. Part (b) was answered more effectively than elsewhere in this section.

Question 10

Some candidates lost marks here by confusing a description of the features of a church building with a description of church services. There was good knowledge of the events which took place at Bethlehem, but there was a need to explain more explicitly why these events made Bethlehem important.

Section 3: Hinduism

Question 11

Various rituals and practices connected with Hindu marriages were outlined very effectively and all candidates achieved level 4 on this part of the question. In part (b), however, answers lost marks by giving detailed accounts of what takes place at Diwali without then explaining why this is such an important occasion.

Questions 12 and 13

Not attempted by any candidates.

Question 14

Answers to this question were slightly disappointing as there were some limited attempts at outlining the work of Ghandi but very little attempt at pinpointing how his work applied the principle of ahimsa. Similarly for part (b) - whilst candidates

obviously had a thorough knowledge of many of the stories associated with Lord Rama, a simple description of such stories could not go beyond level 3.

Question 15

Not attempted by any candidates.

Section 4: Islam

Question 16

This question was generally answered successfully. Candidates showed both a good understanding of the importance of daily prayers and a sound knowledge of ceremonies associated with the birth of a Muslim child.

Question 17

Clearly some candidates drew on their own experiences to answer both parts of this question. This approach proved an effective one.

Question 18

The majority of answers lost marks on part (b) of this question because (as with other parts of the paper) candidates failed to back up their knowledge of sawm with an explanation of why it is so important. Accounts of the guidance of the shari'ah concerning dress were good.

Question 19

One candidate chose to answer this question and showed a sound knowledge of the Revelation of the Qur'an as well as a good understanding of the title 'seal of the prophets'.

Question 20

This was a further example of where candidates successfully drew upon their own experiences to answer both parts of this task.

Section 5: Judaism

Questions 21 to 25 were not attempted by any candidates.

Section 6: Sikhism

Question 26

This was successfully answered by those who chose this question. Candidates showed a sound knowledge of rituals associated with naming a Sikh child and a pleasing understanding of the importance of private devotion for Sikhs.

Question 27

Answers to this question reflected the general tendency on this paper to do better on part (a) than part (b), with some very good descriptions of the ways in which Sikhs show respect to the Guru Granth Sahib but less impressive explanations as to why the Granthi is so important in the community.

Question 28

Some answers to this question failed to notice that in (a) there was a requirement to show how the Five Ks affected a Sikh's life rather than a simple description of what the Five Ks are. However, candidates showed a pleasing understanding of the importance of charity in Sikhism.

Questions 29 and 30 were not attempted by any candidates.

General Points

There was one example of a serious rubric error where a candidate had tried to answer all the questions contained in one section. The candidate could only be awarded marks for two of the questions attempted. Centres should ensure that candidates clearly understand how to approach the examination since trying to answer too many questions could dramatically affect their performance.

IGCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES 4425, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of grade	73	62	51	41	32	24	16	8

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.
